they all tell me the same thing—the United States doesn't have a sufficiently coordinated export strategy for Africa while our global competitors do. The U.S. system of export promotion and finance is a poorly coordinated patchwork of more than a dozen government agencies that American businesses find too difficult to navigate and does not provide focused or aggressive support.

That is why earlier this year, Senators BOOZMAN, COONS, CARDIN, LANDRIEU, KIRK, BROWN, LEAHY and I introduced the Increasing American Jobs through Greater Exports to Africa Act of 2013. It is a straightforward and commonsense piece of legislation. At its simplest, this bill is about creating jobs—American jobs. It would require a coordinated government strategy to help increase United States exports to Africa.

Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of that strategy would be vested in a single position—no more agencies tripping over themselves, no more competing priorities, no more wasting time. It is supported by the Chamber of Commerce, the AFL–CIO, the Corporate Council on Africa, and the National Small Business Association.

President Obama understands the urgency of this issue. Every day we delay, China, India, and others fill the void created by a lack of American commercial leadership on the continent. The President understands that every $1 billion in American exports supports over 5,000 jobs here at home, which is why he has advanced his National Export Initiative. Our legislation would build on this effort and seek to expand U.S. exports to Africa by 200 percent in real dollar value over the next 10 years.

Mr. President, yesterday on the cusp of President Obama's trip to Africa, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed this legislation. The timing could not be better. It is good for the American economy by helping U.S. businesses create jobs here at home by tapping into a burgeoning overseas market hungry for our products. It is good for U.S. foreign policy by keeping America in a position to maintain our global leadership in a shifting geopolitical landscape. And it is good for the people of the African continent by making superior American products and business practices more competitive and financially accessible.

I urge my colleagues to sign on to support this critical effort. While we wait, the Chinese are acting and America is falling further and further behind in Africa.

TREATMENT OF GRAMEEN BANK

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to once again voice publicly my concern with actions the Government of Bangladesh has taken and is poised to take with respect to Grameen Bank and the Grameen family of companies.

Grameen Bank has for decades been the pride of Bangladesh and the envy of the world. The brainchild of Professor Muhammad Yunus, the Bank pioneered a concept of lending that helped the very poor help themselves. Uniquely, the Bank was owned and governed by those very borrowers, giving them both an opportunity to succeed individually and a stake in the success of others.

For this, both the Bank and Professor Yunus have been recognized across the globe with awards and honors. Both were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. The United States has recognized Professor Yunus with its two highest civilian honors—the Presidential Medal of Freedom and, most recently just this April, with the Congressional Gold Medal.

Sadly, since 2010, instead of showcasing Grameen's efforts to lift countless Bangladeshis out of poverty, the Government of Bangladesh has instead engaged in what seems to amount to nothing more than carrying out a political vendetta against Grameen and Professor Yunus. This has resulted in Professor Yunus' forced removal from his position as Managing Director and changes to the governance of the Bank. I and many of my colleagues in the House and Senate, as well as the Obama administration, have repeatedly raised concerns at all levels of the Bangladesh Government over these moves.

We now understand that in the face of our continued objections and those from a wide swath of the international community, the Government of Bangladesh plans to hold a meeting on July 2 at which it is reported that they will finalize plans to take control of Grameen Bank.

Such a troubling move could jeopardize the stability of the Bank and put millions of borrowers, mostly women, who depend on it at risk of sliding back into poverty. It would likely gut the self-government that has been such a critical part of the great success of the Grameen experiment.

The Government of Bangladesh should think twice before taking such action.

Today, the U.S. Government took action against Bangladesh over another issue that has caused great concern—safety of the garment industry in Bangladesh. In response to several high profile garment factory accidents, the administration announced today that it will suspend Bangladesh's trade privileges with the United States.

I am certain this is not the image of Bangladesh that Prime Minister Hasina wants the world to see. In the last few years, Bangladesh has made great strides to rude poverty and to develop a vibrant civil society. The country has been contributed significantly to important international peacekeeping missions around the world.

It is a shame that the government's campaign against Grameen and its slow response to critical labor safety issues overshadow such achievements.

I urge the Government of Bangladesh to end this campaign against Grameen Bank and the Grameen family companies. The United States and, truly, the world are watching.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week, the Senate unanimously adopted a resolution honoring the 50th Anniversary of Congressman JOHN LEWIS's leadership of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee at the height of the Civil Rights Movement.

In the early 1960s, America's promise of equality at the ballot box went unfulfilled for African Americans. Literacy tests, poll taxes, and sometimes, angry mobs stood in the way of many African Americans trying to register to vote and cast ballots.

The members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee—or SNICK as it was called at the time—were inspired by and dedicated to America's promise of equality and democracy for all citizens, regardless of the color of their skin.

These high school and college-aged students led sit-ins. They educated communities about the right to vote. They conducted voter registration drives.

And many of these students marched for civil rights and voting rights with Congressman LEWIS and 600 others in Selma, AL on Sunday, March 7, 1965.

As television cameras rolled and the Nation looked on in horror, these nonviolent marchers were chased down by State troopers, beaten, and bruised so badly by police batons that the day was coined ''Bloody Sunday.''

A few days after ''Bloody Sunday,'' President Johnson addressed the Nation and called on the House and the Senate to pass the Voting Rights Act.

Shortly thereafter, in a moment of bipartisan courage, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, guaranteeing that the fundamental right to vote would never again be canceled out by clever schemes devised to keep African Americans from voting.

Last week, the Senate honored these heroes of the Civil Rights Movement. On Tuesday, five Supreme Court Justices gutted a key provision of the law for which all of these heroes fought and some of them bled and died.

The Supreme Court's decision in Shelby County v Holder strikes down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, which established the formula for those jurisdictions that are covered by the Act's preclearance provisions in Section 5.

This has the effect of gutting Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. Section 5 required jurisdictions in all or part of 16 States with a history of discrimination to get approval from the Department of Justice or a Federal court before making any changes to congressional districts or voting procedures.

Tuesday was not the first time that the Supreme Court ruled on a challenge to the Voting Rights Act.

Though it has been subject to legal challenges previously, the Voting Rights Act has always emerged intact and on sound legal ground until . . . yesterday.

For almost 50 years, the Voting Rights Act has always received overwhelming, bipartisan support in the Halls of Congress and in the Executive Branch.

Each of the four times that the Voting Rights Act has been reauthorized in 1970, 1975, 1982, and most recently in 2006—Congress has done so with the broad bipartisan super majorities that are all too rare these days.

That is because protecting the right to vote should not be a partisan prerogative. It is not a Democratic or Republican issue. It is a fundamental right for every eligible voter and it is a core value of our American democracy.

In 2006, the House of Representatives voted 390 to 33 in favor of reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act. The Senate voted unanimously, 98 to 0, to reauthorize the law. And the final bill was signed into law by President George W. Bush.

There was good reason for this bipartisan support for reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act. Congress developed an extensive record, holding 21 hearings, reviewing more than 15,000 pages in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, and hearing from more than 90 witnesses about the need to reauthorize the law.

On Tuesday, five activist Justices on the Supreme Court decided to completely ignore the extensive record of current and ongoing discrimination that Congress meticulously assembled just 7 years ago.

And you don't have to take my word for it.

Rep. JIM SENSENBRENNER, a Wisconsin Republican who was Chair of the House Judiciary Committee in 2006 and helped secure reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, had this to say:

[t]he legislative record accompanying consideration of the Voting Rights Act is among the most extensive in congressional history.

I am disappointed that the Supreme Court ignored the Congressional findings in issuing this decision.

We all acknowledge the progress that our great country has made on civil rights and voting rights issues. Over time, our Nation has indeed grown to be more perfect—and more inclusive in some ways—than just a few generations ago.

But we are not yet a perfect union. And the jurisdictions covered by the Voting Rights Act have both a demonstrated history and a contemporary record of implementing discriminatory restrictions on voting.

The Supreme Court's decision acknowledges the progress our country has made in expanding the franchise. The Court also acknowledges that discrimination remains in our society today.

Nevertheless, five Justices on the Court have taken the extreme position of gutting the very law that has enabled that progress on voting rights and stands guard to ensure that that progress isn't rolled back.

As my Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights found during a series of hearings I chaired last Congress, the Voting Rights Act remains a critical tool in protecting the right to vote.

All one needs to do is look to the last election cycle to understand the ongoing need for the Voting Rights Act.

After a careful analysis of new voter ID laws in Texas and South Carolina, the Department of Justice used its authority under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act to object to the implementation of new photo identification requirements.

In Texas, according to the State's own data, more than 790,000 registered voters did not have the ID required to vote under the new Texas law.

That law would have had a disproportionate impact on Latino voters because 38.2 percent of registered Hispanic voters did not have the type of ID required by the law.

In South Carolina, the State's own data indicated that almost 240,000 registered voters did not have the identification required to vote under the State's new law.

That included 10 percent of all registered minorities in South Carolina who would not be able to vote under the new law.

That is more than 1 million registered voters who would have been turned away from the polls in Texas and South Carolina last year, if the Department of Justice did not have the authority under the Voting Rights Act to object to those photo identification laws.

Why did the Court neuter the Voting Rights Act?

Chief Justice Robert's opinion claims that the formula used to determine which States should be covered by the Voting Rights Act is not justified by ''current conditions'' of discrimination at the ballot box.

Had they not completely disregarded the 15,000 page CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, perhaps the Chief Justice and his four colleagues would understand the unfortunate fact that literacy tests and poll taxes may have died in the 1960s, but current, more sophisticated means of diluting minority voting strength are alive and well.

In 2001, for example, the city of Kilmichael, MS canceled an election because ''an unprecedented number'' of African American candidates decided to run for office. After the Department of Justice used the Voting Rights Act to require that the election move forward, the town elected its first black mayor and its first majority black City Council.

In 2004, officials in Walker County, TX threatened to prosecute two black students after they announced their candidacies for county office. When that threat didn't keep the students off the ballot, county officials tried to limit black turnout by reducing early voting only at polling places near a historically black college.

Not to be outdone, the State of Mississippi, in 1995, tried to reenact a dual voter registration system ''which was initially enacted in 1892 to disenfranchise black voters.''

As Justice Ginsburg noted in her dissent, ''[t]hese examples, and scores like them, fill the pages of the legislative record.''

Unfortunately, a majority of the Supreme Court chose to ignore both the extensive legislative record of ongoing discrimination in voting and the critical role of the Voting Rights Act in protecting the right to vote.

If there is any question about the major impact of this decision, just look at the statement released by the Texas Attorney General just hours after the Court's decision. He wasted no time announcing that the State would immediately implement its restrictive voter identification law.

Now that the Supreme Court has gutted the most effective Civil Rights law in our Nation's history, hundreds of thousands of voters in Texas may not be able to cast a ballot in the next election.

After the Court's decision, these 790,000 minority, low income, young, rural and other voters in Texas can no longer depend on the Voting Rights Act to protect their access to the ballot.

The Voting Rights Act has never been about who wins an election.

It has never been about political advantage.

It has about ensuring every eligible American can vote and have their vote counted.

The Voting Rights Act has done the important work of protecting the right to vote for almost 50 years. Tuesday's Supreme Court decision is a disappointing one that threatens to undermine our democracy.

There is ample evidence today that some people are still being denied the right to vote, so Congress has a moral and Constitutional obligation to remedy that problem.

Congress must act to restore the key provisions of the Voting Rights Act that protect the right to vote for all Americans—regardless of the color of their skin, their net worth, the language they speak, or the community in which they live.

As Chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights & Human Rights, I will hold hearings to address this troubling decision, so that we can promptly begin the process of correcting the mistake the Supreme Court made.

OBSERVING PTSD AWARENESS DAY

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, on this important day, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder—PTSD—Awareness Day, we must pause to reflect on the